

WE CARE NEWS

WE CARE COMMUNITY SERVICES LTD

August 2022



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13th Finisher Awards

CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENT IN OUR RECOVERY JOURNEYS



Being part of this event was one that I will not soon forget. I was privileged to be a photographer and a guest at **WE CARE**'s 13th Finisher Awards where we celebrated various milestones in recovery. I knew this was a big event for the recipients. However I did not expect the deep level of emotional connection and the significance of it to recovery.

There was so much to witness. From the grateful joy of recipients collecting their awards to the overwhelming love and support from their loved ones, this event truly showed me the importance of celebrating recovery and the impact that addiction has on the lives of people and those around them. Without these positive celebrations, it makes it so much harder to persevere through the challenges in recovery.

While the camera lens captured all the significant moments of the event, it was impossible to fully showcase the sentiments of everyone in a set of photos. One had to be physically present to experience the celebratory atmosphere of love and gratitude.

Although I have only been with **WE CARE** for 2 months, the Finisher Awards will certainly be more than a memory. It may just be a day for some, but for me it will always be a reminder to persevere and never give up.

About the writer: Aneesa interned at **WE CARE** in June and July 2022. An American citizen, she is pursuing her studies in Applied Psychology and Social Work. She has been involved in many aspects of work at **WE CARE**. She is best known at the centre for making *kopi*, snapping photos for our events, creating art and killing it at karaoke.





"Diet or Die" - Food for Thought

My tumultuous experience with the diet culture and mental health



Maybe we have grown up thinking that dieting is the way to go about losing weight. Maybe we have even been encouraged or praised for going on one - for sticking to a keto, no-carb, no-sugar, no-whatever that the dieting industry tells us to. Diet culture is everywhere. It is intrusive to the extent that because it is commonplace, it masks as something seemingly normal, or worse still, enticing. The pervasive conversations about dieting and weight loss have never been this prevalent and loud.

The diet industry thrives on taking advantage of our insecurities about the way we look, especially so with the proliferation of and pressures exerted by social media. They advertise misleading products such as detox teas and waist slimming bands. They preach tips and tricks to eat less on Thanksgiving (which, by the way, should not revolve around food), to work out X hours every

week, not to eat fat, amongst many other mantras that people rely on relentlessly in order to achieve the ideal body.

However, we should stop to consider if the "education" diet culture offers is supported by research. As citizens of the digital age, we must learn to discern fact from fiction, and exercise discretion to sieve out attempts in social media that aim to grip our attention and feed on our insecurities.

Here is what dieting really does to us and our bodies:

Engaging in dieting will only serve to reinforce poor body image and more dangerously, contribute to the normalisation of disordered eating behaviours. Dieting itself is addictive. Once someone embarks on it, it is often very hard to stop even when they have reached their initial goal. With dieting, there is always more weight to lose, and more fat to shed. Dieting also forces the assignment of morality to foods - e.g. good versus bad foods - which increases food obsessions but does not promote health. Instead, it perpetuates the idea that our worth is based on a number.

Biologically, unsatisfied hunger or calorie restriction will lead to mood swings and actually increase the risk of overeating. For example, intense cravings will hit us when we cut certain food groups out, as we lack the nutrients they provide. Our body is 'smarter' than we think and it can signal you to keep eating until it can extract a sufficient amount of nutrients. So dieting can also lead you to dehydration and other problems such as constipation.



Many hormones are also involved in the regulation of our hunger, blood glucose levels, and feelings of satiety. Thus, it can also impact such hormones and the way they work, resulting in hormonal imbalances. To illustrate, dieting has been linked to higher levels of cortisol, which is the hormone responsible for stress.

Another crucial point to note is the influence of dieting on our metabolism. As a result of the reduced food intake, our metabolism will slow down. This may make us feel more sluggish and lethargic, and certain activities we used to enjoy may not bring us the same satisfaction any more as we lack the energy to do them.



There are many other ways that dieting can impact both our mental and physical well-being. Do not succumb to the ethos of the diet culture in spite of how convincing it may sound! Food is fuel and everything can be enjoyed in moderation. It really is about long-term health rather than a short-term, misguided goal to lose weight. Besides, our purpose and worth in life is not meant to be reduced to a number. If any one tries to convince us otherwise, have the courage to push back.

About the writer

Tammy is studying psychology at NUS and aspires to be a clinical psychologist. Passionate about mental health issues, she hopes to be able to help as many as she can. She empathizes with those who are experiencing such struggles, as she herself has had to deal with ill mental health. Reading, dancing and going to the gym are activities that she enjoys, and she shares that her favourite carbohydrate is bread.

RECOVERY JOURNEY

The Freedom of Choice

RECOVERY GIVES ME THE POWER TO CHOOSE

Everything starts with a choice, it's the same for every individual. There are bound to be instances when we make poor decisions, resulting in unpleasant consequences. But we usually can also choose to turn things around. Here, Sha shares with us the choices he made that have defined his life journey.

It was in late 2014 when Sha mixed with the wrong company and was introduced

to substance. The very first time that he tried it, he took five different varieties. His body couldn't accept them and accordingly, it reacted. Even though it wasn't a pleasant experience at first, Sha soon experienced the euphoria that comes with consuming substance. He began to develop the mentality that using is not fundamentally bad, and since the euphoria soon follows afterwards, he could deal with the downside.

In the early days of using, he was able to control the substance intake quantity and frequency of use. Sha also believed that it wasn't an addiction since he was just an occasional user. Even if it was an addiction, he was different from other users because Sha had the perception that he was still in control.

"I thought that since I could still go to work and manage my life, no one around me would know. I didn't have to borrow money to get the substances, I was a functioning addict. There was nothing to worry about. It was only when things started to escalate, when the frequency of using increased, that things got the better of me. Confident that I was keeping everything under control, I became bolder and would openly share that I was using."

Sha added that using substance is prevalent in the LGBTQ+ community especially during parties. Attending these parties increased his usage. When it soon became a dependency, Sha's life also became unmanageable. The substances affected him both physically and mentally. He lost a lot of weight, and developed ailments in his teeth, face and brain. Sha also experienced terrible hallucinations and psychosis.

This was when he realised that he could not manage his substance use on his own. Sha knew that he needed help. With the support from his family, and not knowing where else to turn to for help, Sha found the courage to surrender himself to the police. He recalls walking to the police station with his mother, confessing that he was abusing substance and requesting help.

While many might think that Sha's decision to surrender himself to the police is impulsive (some also assumed that he did this under the influence of substance), this is far from the truth. Sha has his own

reasons and he had contemplated for several days before choosing to live by his values and to surrender.

"I had no idea that NAMS and detox were available. I just believed in the values that I had and did what I thought was right. After I surrendered, I had to do 6 months of rehabilitation in a prison centre. What I didn't know was that I would have to sleep on a concrete floor and be handcuffed half the time. I didn't know that by being honest about what I was going through, I was stripped of all privileges. This made me sad for a bit, because I felt that it didn't make a difference. Even though I was honest and had surrendered, I was in the same cell as others who weren't".

I also think that they are working on changing the system now. They are starting to recognise that substance addiction and substance selling (i.e. trafficking) are two distinct stories. Abusing substance is a form of self-harm, it is something that you choose to do to self-destruct and there is a different avenue to deal with this."

In the prison centre, Sha started his recovery journey through Narcotics Anonymous (NA) when they came in during an outreach session. Sha felt that NA provided a safe space for him as he was new in recovery then. He is grateful for the support provided by this group of people in NA who have walked the same road and who could understand what he was going through. Getting to know people who could stay clean even after 15 or 20 years of using substances motivated Sha to walk continuously on the recovery road.

As Sha attended more NA meetings, he began to speak more about the issues he was struggling with. This made him realise that he was not the only one who was dealing with such issues. He also realised

the importance of reflecting on his past experiences and trying to uncover the underlying reasons behind his past choices. "If we don't look through our inventory, we won't be able to see where we went wrong. If we are not willing to reflect or seek help, no one else can do it for you because they are just bystanders and observers. All they can do to help is by telling and advising you. They can tell you that there are help groups available but are you willing to go?"

After listening to others who advised him to seek help from a counsellor with expertise in substance abuse disorders, he made the decision to go for counselling. He was introduced to **WE CARE** and joined several activities while he was on tagging.

Sha is grateful to **WE CARE** for providing a safe recovery platform and physical space. What stood out for Sha were 3 key characteristics - anonymity, the non-judgemental environment and mutual trust. He believes that **WE CARE** does a wonderful job striking a balance between providing social services and promoting self-help. Besides dealing with the underlying addiction and psychological problems, **WE CARE** also looked into one's self-development, such as getting employment or upgrading of skills.

Having a space like the drop-in centre creates a warm and cosy environment where vulnerable beneficiaries can feel

safe. Sha remembers that in his early recovery days, this space was particularly helpful because he could just drop by and converse with others who understood his struggles.

Activities such as baking, yoga, mindfulness therapy and lunchtime meetings are also what Sha enjoys participating in at **WE CARE**. Sha thinks that the lunchtime meetings are especially helpful because it feels like having the best of 2 programmes merged together. This activity then becomes like a spiritual program, where stories shared are more directed to the daily readings. Sha could relate to the daily readings and this gives him the strength and knowledge that he is not alone in working recovery. He also likes the group's diversity as participants are of different age groups and sexuality. There is bound to be someone who is going through a different stage of recovery and everyone is given the opportunity to share and learn from each other's experiences.

Find out more about Sha's personal experience at **WE CARE** and how it shaped his recovery journey in the next edition of our newsletter.

About the writer: Valerie is a student at NUS pursuing a Psychology degree. She interned at **WE CARE** during the pandemic and is looking forward to working in public health.



Sex addiction or compulsive sexual behaviour disorder, according to the ICD-11*, is characterised by a pattern of failure to control sexual impulses or urges resulting in repetitive sexual behaviour. Love addiction can be defined quite similarly, with the dependency being around behaviours with seeking the “perfect” relationship and their associated emotional patterns.

April 2022 marked three years in my sex addiction treatment. Through therapy and support groups, I have also acknowledged the label of love addict. I initially sought help when my sexual proclivities were consuming a large portion of my day. My decade-long conduct led to negative implications in school, family, and self-esteem. Despite these consequences, I continued to fail at reducing those behaviours.

In the area of sex, it was simple to define the problem. I had been living out a pattern of pornography, hook-ups and cruise clubs that consumed most of my day. In addition, I utilised much of my headspace planning and executing these trysts. I had deluded myself into thinking that “making love” was how I would experience my emotional highs and lows. Eventually, I found that those impulsivities were becoming more distressing to my well-being.

My recovery became more profound when I started processing my love avoidance with my therapist. In the romantic department, I've yet to experience a committed relationship which I had always attributed to my uncertainty around my sexuality and gender identity. I viewed myself as undeserving of happiness and thus self-sabotaged most friendships and romantic correspondences. Eventually, I found myself anorexic emotionally with even the little intimate connections I had.

Sex and love addiction can be seen as two sides of the same coin. Sexualised behaviour was how I acted out the feelings of loneliness and shame that came from being avoidant of love.

At the same time, I manifested those feelings of isolation through avoiding emotional intimacy even with friends and family. As a result, I turned to the unhealthy physical and emotionally charged coping pattern of sex and love addiction.

Growing up, I inherited a skewed blueprint as an offspring of a dysfunctional marriage. Through talking and processing some of those early beliefs, I realised that my addiction played an insidious role in how I viewed people and interactions. In addition, I held many ideals that contributed to my low self-esteem and in the long run, made dating and intimacy difficult.

In my recovery, I have learnt to let people into my life. Whether through professional mental health services or other suggestions in recovery, the manner in which I view sex and love has become less distorted. Sex addiction and love addiction are some ways by which I navigate my unhealthy focus with sex and relationships. With my addiction, there is a familiarity around performing the same unhealthy rituals hoping for different results. I have realised that the distinction between sex addiction and love addiction isn't always as clear in my recovery. Thus, I usually view experiences through either or both lenses in recovery. In doing so, I confront my destructive addictive patterns so that they don't continue to rule my life.



There is help available at **WE CARE**

At **WE CARE**, we provide help and treatment for all forms of addiction. Entry to our services usually start with individual counselling in which we do an intake assessment session. Within our services, we have a recovery program known as SPLA (Sex, Porn and Love Addiction) and SMART (Self-Management And Recovery Training) recovery group.

In addition to our in-house programmes, many have also found it helpful to attend autonomous support groups such as Sexaholics Anonymous (SA) or Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA).

Sexaholics Anonymous (SA)

Sexaholics Anonymous is a recovery program based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous and received permission from AA to use its Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in 1979.

Sexaholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober. Their primary purpose is to stay sexually sober and help others to achieve sexual sobriety.

Sexaholics Anonymous meets at 7.30pm on Tuesdays at **WE CARE**. Please email sasingapore@gmail.com for more information.

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA)

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, or SLAA, is a program for anyone who suffers from an addictive compulsion to engage in or avoid sex, love, or emotional attachment. They use the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous to recover from these compulsions. Focusing on their addictive sexual and emotional behaviour, they find a common denominator in their obsessive/compulsive patterns, which transcends any personal differences of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Please email SLAASG.Recovery@gmail.com for more information.

***International Classification of Diseases** · The global standard for diagnostic health information (11th Revision 2022)

About the writer

Since finding about **WE CARE** earlier in 2022, Bear (who uses they/them pronouns) has been recovering and volunteering at **WE CARE** while maintaining active participation in the local SLAA LGBT group. Even though they are easily distracted, they are an energetic presence at our centre. Their interests have recently extended to crocheting and fishkeeping.



Making A Comeback

BREATHING NEW ZEST INTO OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Hear from some of our dedicated volunteers and staff on what it's like to revive our Facebook and Instagram identities

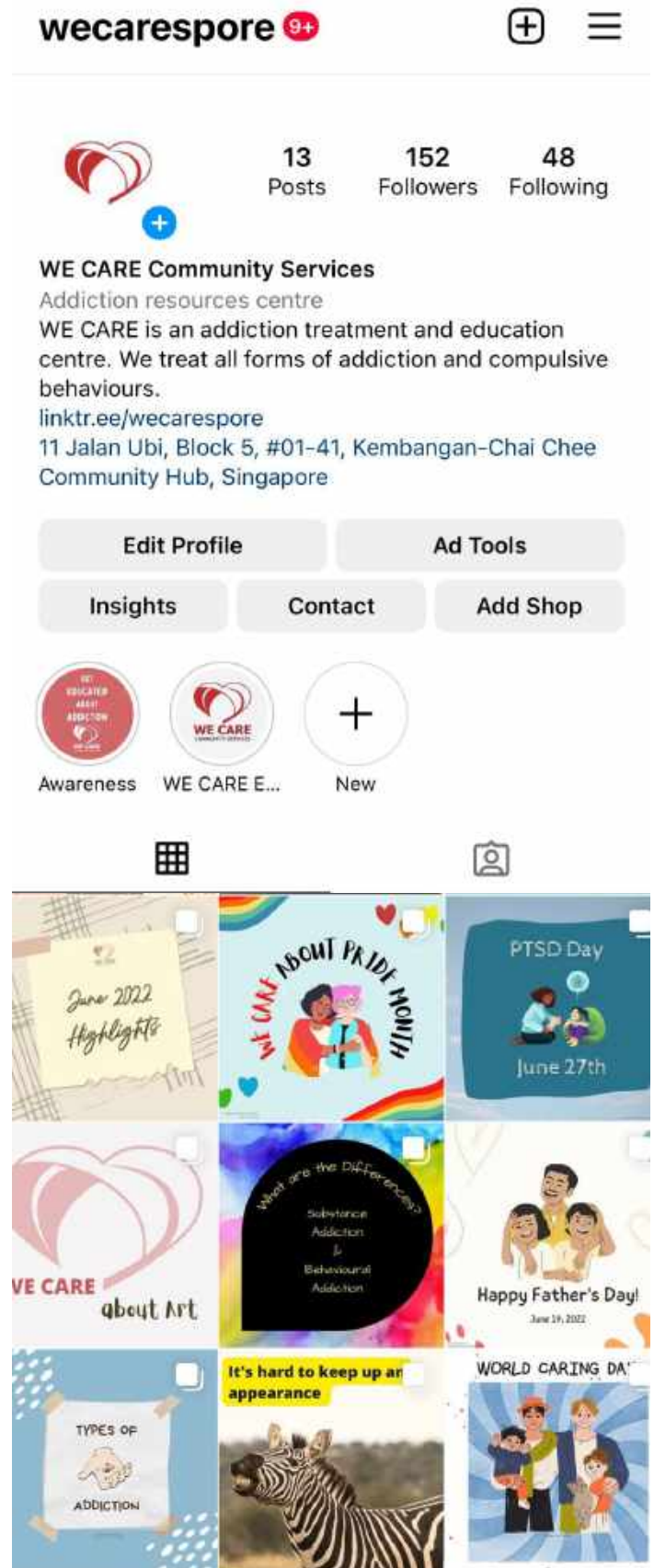
The Covid pandemic forced many of us indoors and behind our computer screens, leading to a spike in online activity, and inevitably, internet-related addiction issues. As restrictions ease and people return to social settings, we are more aware of the importance to stay connected to the online communities – especially for those who have grown accustomed to digital space.

With more hands on deck, it was a good opportunity to revive and revamp our social media platforms. Refreshing our Instagram feed and recreating a new Facebook page allowed us to start anew and communicate who **WE CARE** is – a safe space for all recovering persons. We hope to establish our social media platforms as channels of communication and outreach to better serve the recovering community.

- Simon (**WE CARE** staff)

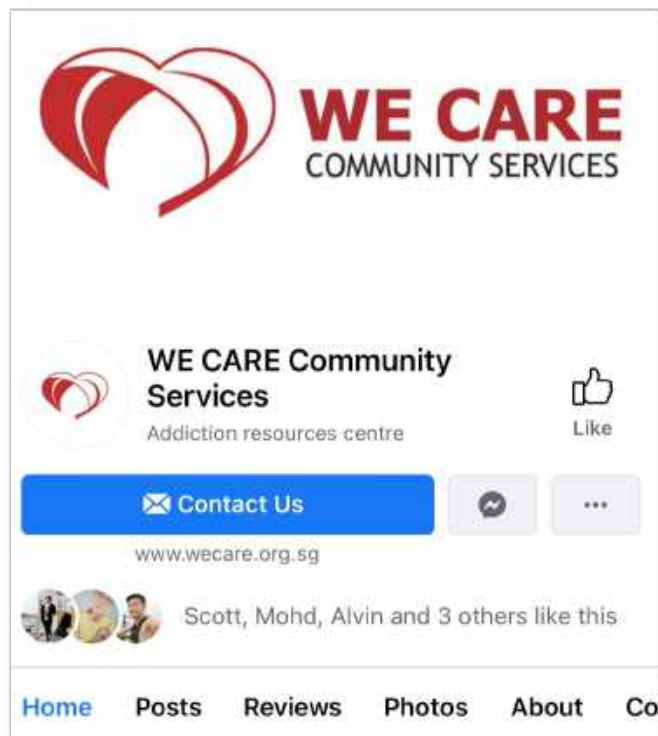


Scan to follow us



Rebuilding the social media for **WE CARE** was an experience that I was able to learn so much from. I came into this project with hopes that we could use social media platforms to help encourage conversations about addiction. I wanted to ensure that the content was educational yet entertaining, and for each post to have a meaningful rationale.

I was excited and motivated to use our social media platforms to address the stigma around recovery and addiction, and reach out to more people especially those who are unaware of **WE CARE**. Through my conversations with those around me, I realise many people still hold assumptions and misconceptions about addiction. Through the content we share, I believe we can help educate people about the realities surrounding addiction and recovery.



We use design software Canva to create most of our content for Instagram, making each post aesthetically consistent and pleasing, rendering each post unique and visually impactful. Using Canva also permits multiple users to access the files, making teamwork feasible and seamless. I am excited to see how our social media presence grows in the future. My ultimate dream is that we will be able to use the platform to help broach the topic of addiction and recovery amongst a wider audience.

- Aneesa





FEATURE

Art is an example of holistic recovery. At **WE CARE**, we have many talented artists who express important messages about recovery, identity, and more through their work. In this issue, we asked two **WE CARE** community members to share their artwork and the significance of their pieces.

Finding Serenity

Finding Serenity was created while she was warded in the National Addictions Management Service (NAMS) in 2019. Prior to this, Marla had always struggled with the arts and music due to psychosis. However, she began to explore creating art again while warded in NAMS as she navigated the symptoms of psychosis. This piece signifies her first steps in recognising and processing her feelings during that phase of her recovery.

“After years of using substance to cope with depression, anxiety, and trauma, being in a safe and conducive space with the right people helped me take the steps towards sobriety”.

The painting was created using water-soluble ink layered with water to give an overlapping effect. This was done several more times to form multiple layers of ink, followed by a pen layer. Marla also used recycled paper, so previous designs can be seen on the paper upon a closer look. These processes and techniques were time-consuming and took several days to complete. Finding Serenity encompasses the beginning of a new journey focused on recovery and rediscovery.



Medina Flowing

Another inspirational piece in **WE CARE**'s collection is Medina Flowing. The vision behind this piece was to communicate Marla's reconciliation with shame and desires, and was created six months after being discharged from NAMS. A unique feature in her piece is the gradual soothing effect from the blending of water and ink. The act of painting also helped Marla take her mind away from obsessing over sex and drugs. Similar to her earlier work, Finding Serenity, it conveys the continued work of recovery and being in a more content state. To Marla, this piece is about healing tears, not shame. It recognises how seeking a higher power helped her remain grounded especially during tough times.

“At times, creating art is just making sense of things and it's not always created for others. When you make art from pain, you fear witnessing yourself”



Birds of Paradise

Fandi created the Birds of Paradise as his first piece after his onboarding at **WE CARE** in 2014. This piece is one of several pieces people know Fandi: Birds of Paradise continues to be talked about by those who come to **WE CARE**, with a strong message about the importance of joy and resilience.

“When I first came to **WE CARE**, we started a creative room and we got to paint, so it was my first time after a long absence from painting and exploring my gift.” Through his artwork, Fandi was able to explore how life can be so colourful even though his past was “gloomy and dark”. The primary technique in his painting was the variety of colours he used for the birds. This was inspired by his love for contemporary art while he was studying graphic design, which often incorporates the use of more colours. He chose four colours for his painting, and a wider variety for the birds, including pastel colours, to show his love for colour. The deeper message is that as one recovers, one starts to experience life more fully, and this translates to the ability to perceive and appreciate more colours. The title also communicates a joyful essence in life, where the birds are living in a colourful paradise. This piece was one of his first attempts at exploring colour in a new way.

Fandi’s joy for painting is clearly expressed by what it means to him: “Painting helped me to create. I always loved to create things. But addiction stopped me from being able to explore this passion fully. I assumed that drugs would enhance my creative ability, but instead I was blocked and became lazy, until I began my recovery.” This piece was a way to get back into art and look at life as something filled with colour and joy. Although the piece is two-dimensional, it contains a wide palette of colours that makes it come to life. This is manifested by the ability to get as much from life as one wants.

“Life is just like a painting. You are in control of the painting. You can control your life, paint it how you want. I claim my own happiness”.

- Aneesa

Events Highlights

Living the sober life and loving it. Check out some of our fun-tastic events in the recent past!



Bollywood Dance with NJC Indian Dance



All Smiles All Around at Universal Studios Singapore



Laughing Yoga with Joy

WE CARE's Got Talent





Meeting the cast at Ah Girls Go Army Movie Premier



Art Appreciation with Yen P



Mindful Movement



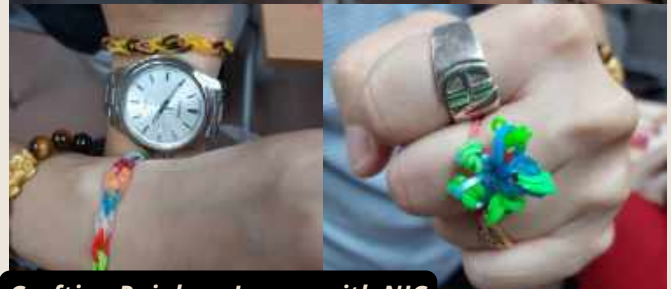
Baking Good Time!



Crafting Rainbow Looms with NJC



Ping Pong Pros



Understanding addiction is an important step in addressing stigma. In this section, our Recovery Guides, people with a lived experience of addiction, answer some questions commonly encountered during our outreach sessions.

What is a habit and what is an addiction?

A habit is an act or action which has developed into something that is done regularly. However, one would not be physically, emotionally or mentally affected when the habit is not followed through.

Addiction is a gradual development of dependency on a substance or behaviour that eventually takes over all areas of one's life.

How do I know if I have an addiction issue?

Addiction is a mental disorder and it affects our brain function. I know I have an issue when I find myself unable to function normally without using my drug of choice.

Khairi



How long does it take to recover from addiction?

Personally, recovery from addiction is a lifelong journey and I live life sober one day at a time. I recognise the difference between recovery and cure. While one can be considered as recovering stably, one is never completely cured.

Can I have more than one type of addiction?

I know of many recovering people who struggle with multiple addictions as we tend to seek a greater "high".

Jess

What are the types of addictions?

There are many types but they are generally categorised under substance and behavioural addictions. The more common ones include, drugs, video games, internet, sex, gambling and more.

Can I be completely recovered from my addiction?

*Addiction is a chronic mental health condition and one cannot be completely cured. However, I have experienced long-term sobriety and recovery through self-help groups and treatment at **WE CARE**.*

Enid



What's Happening @ WE CARE

Mark your calendars and join us for these upcoming events

National Day & Durian Party

5 Aug, 2022 @ 5pm onwards

Join us for a durian-licious celebration!
Approach RGs for more details

SPCA VISIT

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 1ST, 10:30 AM

LEARN ABOUT THE SPCA AND MEET SOME FURRY FRIENDS!

LIMITED SEATS!
TRANSPORTATION INCLUDED!

Ask our Recovery Guides for more information :)

HELP US CARE ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT!

BEACH CLEAN UP

WED 24TH AUGUST 9:00 AM
EAST COAST BEACH

JOIN US TO CLEAN THE BEACH AND SAVE THE PLANET!

ASK RECOVERY GUIDES FOR MORE INFORMATION

Community Chest **Heartstrings Walk 2022**

10 SEP 2022 | MARINA BAY SANDS
SATURDAY 7:15PM - 8:30PM

Let's walk as one to empower lives

The Community Chest Heartstrings Walk returns in a physical format this year! We invite you to join us for a 4km Charity Fun Walk along the scenic Marina Bay Waterfront Promenade.

To celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival, participants may also choose to walk with a lantern in hand!

The Community Chest Heartstrings Walk 2022 is held in collaboration with the Sands for Singapore Charity Festival.

REGISTER NOW!

SCAN TO REGISTER

REGISTERED BY 12 AUG 2022

Sponsored by: Community Chest, NCS, MARINA BAY SANDS, Singapore Red Cross, SPCARE



*Do you recognise any of the **WE CARE** team?*



Does putting them in a more casual setting help?

Transforming Lives. Restoring Families.



Counselling | Therapy Programme | Drop-in Centre | Recovery Support Group | Events & Activities



We are located at:

Kembangan-Chai Chee
Community Hub
11 Jln Ubi, #01-41, Block 5
Singapore 409074
Tel: 3165 8017
Fax: 6491 5338
E-mail: help@wecare.org.sg

WE CARE aims to be a leading centre for the transformation of persons with addiction.

We treat all forms of addictions, including alcohol, drugs, pornography, sex, gaming, internet and compulsive behaviour like shoplifting.

Our core services are:

- Counselling for recovering addicts and their families
- Educational and therapy programmes
- A drop-in centre
- Recovery support groups
- Outreach talks on awareness

For more information on what we do, please visit:
www.wecare.org.sg

Counselling sessions are private and confidential.



WE CARE needs your help.

WE CARE Community Services Ltd is a registered charity.

We provide treatment for all forms of addictions. our services are open to persons of all races , cultures and religion.

To fund our programmes and services, we depend mainly on donations from individuals and corporations.

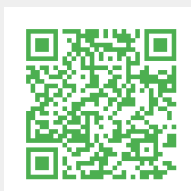
Your support enables us to provide quality care to individuals and families affected by addictions and compulsive behaviours.

As we are an approved Institution of Public Character (IPC), donations to **WE CARE** are tax deductible.

To make a donation:

Write a cheque payable to "WE CARE Community Services Limited".
Alternatively, go online to make a donation at:

- Giving.sg/we-care-comunity-services-limited; or
- Wecare.give.asia



**Help is just a phone call
away**

If you have a problem with addiction, or if you know someone who has issues, call us at **3165 8017**. Or email help@wecare.org.sg

The first step in getting better is to ask for help.